The Inquirer

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NOTE TO A YOUNG MINISTER

My Dear Charles,

(Allow me to call you that!) So you were at the annual meetings of the Old Students' Association of Manchester College, Oxford, the Unitarian College in Oxford. I was there too. They went on for three days, and among other things we discussed "The World Predicament". Some of our brethren went on for most of the night also, discussing not only the world predicament but the Unitarian one. You, for the most part, were silent. You allowed some of us garralous and intrusive elders to do most of the talking, and I am a bit conscience stricken. This is not the reason for my writing to you. The real reason is that I want to tell you how much I admire you. It would be difficult to do this face to face, so I am doing it in this way.

I have had to ask myself why I admire you, just to give you the real reasons for admiring yourself. I am not afraid of the latter; you have managed far bigger personal issues than that.

So here goes. We had two brethren from the other side of the Atlantic with us. They made a splendid contribution to our meetings; and they were very much a part of us. They told us in our private discussions of the work they were doing and the response they were receiving. They told it humbly and modestly, quite able to measure for themselves the nature of their work in contrast to yours. I suspect, too, that if there were any flaws they would be able to find them as drastically as anybody else. They told us of what sounded to us like wonderful success; of two services on Sunday mornings because one service was impracticable, so many people wished to attend. They described to us the wonderful organisation of their congregational life, most of it carried through by the laity. Where we have to speak in tens in our congregations, they have to speak of hundreds. Where we had to think of a hard-pressed laity, they were thinking of a laity who took over the administration of large and growing congregations, and were fermenting with ideas of further growth.

Religion was flourishing. The ministers were on the crest of the wave; and how pleasant the crest must have sounded to you. Let me be careful, Charles. I want to reassure you. Our colleagues who related their experiences would not for one moment think themselves more able or dedicated than you.

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But it probably escaped your notice that at Manchester College you too were living on the top of a crest of a wave. Through no fault of anyone living, however, it is frozen. You could have a good look at it from the outside. You probably did, although you may not have been aware of what you were looking at. It is some seventy or eighty years since Manchester College was built. The Unitarian movement in this country was proud with Advance, and I can tell you there were some pretty forceful and active laity about. The Unitarian movement provided a big slice of the money to build the College. The intention, partly, was to make a dent on Oxford, if not to capture it. And there was sense to it, for there was liberalism in Oxford, the kind of liberalism in which Unitarianism thrived in those days. Jowett, the Master of Balliol, could be described as a disguided Unitarian, and he was friend of Martineau and nearly married Florence Nightingale. The religious life of England, so thought many Unitarians, was ready to be swept by Unitarianism, and it was not a foolish idea, particularly when seen from the top of the crest.

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But just have a look at the crest from your vantage point. It is still there, frozen beautifully in the designs of the windows of the college chapel. They are beautiful windows, that is why they remember with unforgiving accuracy. They were executed by Burne-Jones, and by some extraordinary association between an artist and ideas he has captured something of that Unitarian Advance. Jesus of Nazareth, in the major window over the altar table, is depicted as a youthful, handsome, Greek shepherd carrying a lamb on his shoulder. There is not a hint of travail or pain about Him. Even the lamb he is carrying rests most comfortably upon his shoulders.

The side windows depict virtues and ideas through magnificent human figures. There is no distortion, every eye, nose and ear is in place. Even Poverty, kneeling gracefully and subversively, is beautiful in receiving help. And of course Courage is represented by the knight in armour.

Courage could more properly have been represented by Florence Nightingale, standing by, stripped of all conceivable armour, whilst a wounded soldier had his leg amputated without anaesthetic; or by Olivia Hill taking on the slumdom of London single-handed and transforming some of it; or, as some of us can see it today, by the sons of some of the parents who were at the opening of the college, submerged in the "lost generation" in the trench warfare of the 1914 war. I would not wish the windows away, they are too evocative of a splendour of a past to be anything other than impressive. But the crest they represent is now an artefact, frozen, beautiful, full of repose, but without a hint of tragic existence about it.

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Our ancestors, Charles, at the top of their crest mistook social optimism and a social background for religion. Or rather they thought they did. They did their best to lie to themselves, but they could not really put it off, they were too big for that, as certain hints scattered about Manchester College will tell you. But nevertheless the glamour of what they thought to be true is caught in these windows, and it is as far from your problems, Charles, as a couple of congregations waiting to see your building on a Sunday morning are removed from your experience.

Do not mistake me. I know you are going for the crest. You would not be where you are if that thrill were not in you. Someday you and the Unitarian movement in this country will reach there. But meanwhile allow me to admire you deeply in what seems to be the trough. When you reach the crest the trough might be remembered in it, and then the crest will be worth riding.

I have nearly finished, but I would like to call upon the novelist, Arthur Koestler, to help me out. He probably is as representative of some of the pangs of this age as anybody else. In his autobiography he quotes a legend, it is called the legend of "the thirty-six just men". Here it is:

"When I was a child, our Rabbis taught me that if thirty-six men did not exist, mankind couldn't last a day, it would drown in its own wrongs. The thirty-six are not marked out by any rank or office. They cannot be recognised, they never yield their secret, perhaps they are not even aware of it themselves: and yet it is they who, in every successive generation, justify our existence and who every day save the world anew."

See you next year.

Yours—Billy!

VIEWS, NEWS AND NOTES

By A. B. Downing

COLLEGE Closing Proceedings in America are called Commencements, no doubt on the laudable principle that it is better to celebrate the beginning of a professional career than the end of an academic one. A college carefully cultivates some distinguished citizen, organizes a lavish programme and gets him to address the newly fledged baccalaureates on some such subject as "You Can't Stop Here". Ornate programmes are printed, hymns are sung to the glory of America and everything surges forward in a wave of transatlantic optimism. A percipient observer like Dr. Richard D. Pierce of Boston, who is Dean of a college himself and was present at the Closing Proceedings of the Unitarian College, sagely informed me afterwards that we in England do these things rather differently. As a New Englander he is not without a gift for understatement.

The Closing Proceedings at our Unitarian College follow a certain slow stateliness of pattern, though it is not impossible for dignity to be mixed with enthusiasm. Such seemed to be the case this year. For one thing the College was crowded by a swarm of visitors for the first time and more academic part of the occasion. And there was another crowd, almost an uncomfortably large one, for the Valedictory Service which was held by way of farewell to the out-going students in the handsome modern setting of the new Cross St. Chapel. There was enough enthusiasm about to provide a welcome antidote to that Unitarian malaise which doth so easily beset us when we venture to examine critically what we are really doing and where precisely we are going. For good or ill, of course, some people are protected from this malaise by a staunch refusal to ask any awkward questions.

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This year we were able to luxuriate in the thought that four students have completed their various courses. Such a "Commencement" certainly was worth celebrating. Two of the young men concerned are lay pastors who have been running churches as well as pursuing their studies. The other two were full-timers who, being less encumbered by outside burdens, had more academic time available to become wholly divergent in their respective theological notions. Mr. L. Hallworth of Padiham-cum-Burnley, and Mr. Derek Smith of Mossley, can both look back on a heavy time-table successfully endured. Mr. William McMillan, now with his Manchester M.A. degree and with energetic activity at Platt Chapel behind him, left College to return to his native Ireland where everyone will find him impeccably provided with the right biblical emphasis, a talent for evangelism and a taste for wit. Mr. Donald Dunkley, guided and upheld by an unrepentant humanism, leaves behind him a no less interesting career of student enterprise in various directions, especially in the sphere of international liberal religious youth work. No one certainly can complain that we Unitarians turn out ministers to a pre-conceived and tailored pattern.

The Visitor's Address this year was given by Dr. S. J. Kennett, who spoke about the significance of Theology from the viewpoint of a scientist; in that pleasant, clear-headed way of his he drew some interesting analogies between the way both scientists and theologians deal with ideas. Dr. Kennett is the chairman of the Ministry Committee of the General Assembly and the College was proud to have such official denominational weight on its platform.

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At the Valedictory Service the preacher was the president of our General Assembly. The Rev. Arthur Vallance uplifted and enheartened the large gathering by his conduct of the occasion, which was further embellished by the performance of Miss Morris at the new organ, and by the talents of the Cross St. Choir with their good voices and nice summer clothing. In his sermon, Mr. Vallance gave himself the hard task of reconciliation. Having heard at the College the out-going performances of Messrs. McMillan and Dunkley, he nobly devoted his hard-earned tea-time to sitting under one of the College trees in order to meditate constructively on the divergent tendencies to be observed, by way of humanism and theism, in these two young men. We were able to enjoy the fruit of his experience and inspiration in the sermon, even if Mr. Vallance's dignified struggles were unlikely to shift Messrs. McMillan and Dunkley from their concrete positions. But we were all deeply moved by the farewell given to the four new Unitarian apostles and preachers of the future.

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We were all troubled this year that the Principal had come to the end of his Session's work in a state of near exhaustion on account of overwork and the multitudinous calls upon his time and energies. We are unlucky at U.C.M. in that the whole weight of College administration falls in practice upon the Principal and his wife. In addition, Mr. Kenworthy has been at the beck and call of many outside bodies, with the inevitable result. With the helpful and practical co-operation of the Rev. John Kielty, the Principal and Mrs. Kenworthy have been sent away for a long rest and we on the College Committee will be stirred, not before time, to finding ways and means of lightening their load. We deeply appreciated Mr. Kenworthy's appearance at much cost to himself, at the Closing Proceedings, for his annual report on the work of the College.

And so, jolted into a mood of realism, we shall face the new Session with all our usual problems and some more besides, but at least with the pleasant prospect of four new incoming students ready to prepare themselves for the many demands of our Unitarian witness.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY COUNCIL MEETING
8th JULY, 1959

THE Opening Devotions were taken by the Rev. M. Johnson. The President extended a welcome to the Rev. E. A. Cahill, Director of the Department of World Churches, of the A.U.A.

It was decided that the surplus from the Annual Meetings, 1959, be put into a separate fund for use at future provincial meetings. The Programme Committee was directed to plan the 1960 meetings so as to give opportunity for the discussion of certain pressing problems now confronting the Assembly, and in order to do this, to advise the various societies and holders of sectional meetings that they would only be able to have time for purely formal business this year. It was agreed for an experimental period after 1960 that the Essex Hall Lecture should normally be delivered at a different time and place from the Annual Meetings.

providing the 1962 Lecture would be given in connection with the Annual Meetings because of the 1662-1962 celebrations. The Publications Department were empowered to appoint an editorial committee to consider the possibility of issuing a new hymn book. Permission was also given to the Publicity Department to issue a Unitarian badge. On the recommendation of the Ministry Committee it was decided to draw up a National Roll of Lay Preachers which would be included in the Year Book.

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It was reported that Dr. S. J. Kennett would be visiting Ghana, and he was asked to take a message of greeting from the Council to the Lagos Church. Dr. Kennett hopes to be able to preach at the Lagos Church.

The officers were empowered to approach a number of leading lay men and women with a view to forming an *ad hoc* committee to deal with the implementing of the two resolutions adopted at the Leeds Annual Meetings on stipends and the grouping of churches. It was further agreed to ask the Publications Department to consider the production of a leaflet for free distribution which would give a brief summary of Unitarian Beliefs, such summary to be derived from existing publications or those about to be published.

The Council heard with pleasure that a new book "Essays in Unitarian Theology" contributed by a number of leading ministers, would be available in the autumn, provided the printing dispute does not interfere.

The Council appointed four persons to meet representatives of the Unitarian College, Manchester, to discuss certain important problems.

Correspondence

Letters should be addressed to the Editor, "The Inquirer", 14 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1. They should not in general exceed three to four hundred words in length.

"The Flight of the Educated"

Sir: Admittedly the writer of the above article made some drastic proposals, some of which may be impractical, but the issues he raised were pertinent and we ought to be able to face up to them with less wrath and indignation than your two correspondents (Mr. Kemshall and Miss Beard) displayed. Both of them seemed to have "seen red" when they glanced through your contributor's challenging article, thereby rendering themselves incapable of reasoned discussion. Neither of them dealt with the problems raised, e.g., the need of a well educated ministry — the colleges problem (still unsolved) — ministers' inadequate stipends—redundant and badly sited churches and the necessity of employing our resources where growth and advance can be made.

"Who is to select and train able candidates for our Ministry and place them at potential promising points in our movement with assured Burnham scale salaries?" asks Mr. Kemshall. Well, who does it now? Has he heard of the General Assembly which deals with such matters? Surely it is wild talk to say that such functions performed by the Assembly will mean, to quote Mr. Kemshall, "the end of the Unitarian ministry and of our deeply cherished mental and spiritual traditions of freedom of thought and speech". Neither the General Assembly nor any other of our denominational bodies closes churches. They close themselves, when they do close, by their own inanition, and churches or rather congregations can die in spite of their endowments. The letters of Mr. Kemshall and Miss Beard reveal a static conception of our body, but we are essentially a movement which can only survive and grow by the contribution it makes to religious life and thought and we cannot allow its Ministry to fall behind the educational standards of other professions.

John W. Mace.

Collompton, Devon.

Sir: I am glad you have received condemnation of that piece of nonsense in recent columns. It did no credit whatever to the reputation of the paper which appears in reading rooms etc. For years some of us have been trying to disprove the ancient myth that in order to be a Unitarian one has to be a professor in or of something, but that we stood for integrity in thinking and reasoning, allied to depth of right feeling about religion. The article was nothing more than a manifestation of that intellectual snobbery which has done us far more harm than anything else.

Mr. Kemshall quite properly asks who are these arbiters of what is correct and who shall be the selected wonders who are to run our churches, that is, the few that dared to stay open in such crazy circumstances? How condescending of your writer to say that the good non-degree man might have been better for one and how much worse the other sort would have been without one.! A degree is the indication that a man or woman has received an academic training of some kind. It does not make either a better minister. Only circumstances prevented my efforts in this field, for I was working for my living at a time when young men not much more than boys were preparing for graduate courses.

Yours:
W. H. Cordell.

Glossop.

The Only Denominational Banner

Sir: Under the heading "No Unitarians" a correspondent recently deplored the fact that there was no Unitarian present to give his testimony at the Albert Hall Meeting "Modern War: A Challenge to Christians". One might add that as far as we are aware, of the 15,000 who marched into Trafalgar Square from Aldermaston there were only three Unitarians, and they marched under the banner of the Friends. But cheer up. We do things a little better in the North. On a 400 strong march through the streets of Manchester recently, the only denominational banner (apart from the Friends, of course) which we observed was that of the Unitarian Peace Fellowship. There were three Unitarian ministers, but we only observed three ministers of all other denominations, though there may have been dozens of them in the disguise of open-necked shirts in the blazing heat of the Summer's hottest day, as indeed were two of our own men.

Yours, Ronald Blackburn.

Stockport.

News Review

UNITARIAN TRUSTS— AN IMPORTANT ACT

By Leslie Procter

THE General Assembly 1959 handbook lists a number of trusts connected with our denomination.

Apparently we are one of the wealthiest bodies of Christians in the country, that is, per head of membership.

Until 1949 the constitutions of charities were loosely interpreted by the Inland Revenue. However, when the Oxford Group case was carried to the House of Lords, it was decided that in the case of charities formed by incorporation under the Companies Act, if the memorandum of association permits activities which are not charitable, then the exemption from taxation is withdrawn.

Following this, in the next year, it was allowable to amend the constitution.

Many charities are governed by trust deeds which for years were considered effective as constituting a charity. Because they also permitted non-charitable activities, the trusts were treated as liable to income tax consequent upon another 1949 case.

Since then, at least one Unitarian trust has continued to pay income tax amounting to many hundreds of pounds.

The obvious injustice was, however, remedied by the Charitable Trusts (Validation) Act, 1954.

All persons concerned with trust deeds executed before 16th December, 1952, should seriously review the taxation position.

The 1954 Act provides that money expended on charitable activities will be subject to exemption from income tax, even though the trust is not wholly charitable.

There are, therefore, valid grounds for believing that some trustees of charities may be unaware of the changed legislation and that there is a possibility of repayment of income tax from 30th July, 1954, to date.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY STAFF APPOINTMENT

A vacancy will occur at the end of August for a Shorthand-typist to act as secretary to the Rev. D. E. Richards and Mr. S. Hellen. Any young lady is asked to communicate with the Secretary of the Assembly, Essex Hall, Essex Street, London, W.C.1, stating age and qualifications. Luncheon vouchers are issued and a Staff Pension Scheme is operated.

This is a permanent post in which the occupant can render valuable service to our movement.

THE INQUIRER

All letters and manuscripts for the Editor must reach the Office not later than Monday morning for publication the same week. All communications must be accompanied by the name and address of the sender.

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Alltyplace, South Wales: For the second year in succession "All Present Services" were organised in this group of churches after a thorough canvass of the district. The churches were filled to capacity on a fine day in June and altogether there were four hundred communicants. The services were conducted by the minister, the Rev. D. Jacob Davies.

Western Union Ministers' Conference

The Ministers of the Western Union met in conference at Penscot, on the slopes of the Mendip Hills of Somerset, from June 22nd-25th.

Under the general theme of "The Religious Outlook", papers were given on "Why Does Unitarianism Not Grow?", "Unitarians Believe More Not Less", "Changing Moral Standards", "Health and Healing", and "Reincarnation".

Each contribution led to a frank and full discussion of the important and urgent issues raised. This interplay of informed viewpoints and opinions was felt to be most helpful for the practical work of the ministry.

Beyond the immediate concern of the meetings, were the abiding values of sympathetic understanding, and the sense of a dedicated common fellowship in the work of the Spirit.

O.S.A. at M.C.O.

The annual meetings of the Old Students' Association of Manchester College, Oxford, took place at the college in glorious mid-summer weather, from Monday to Friday, June 22 to 26. Four papers were given under the general title "The Church in the Changing World". The Rev. F. M. Ryde, president for the year, guided the affairs with an alacrity which gave adequate place to every contribution in a necessarily full programme.

The Rev. H. J. McLachlan set the scene in his outline of "The Present World Predicament", a predicament which has arisen in the powerful growth of nationalism so far unthwarted by the growth of education. He took up the statement that Christianity is not equal to modern requirements, and suggested that the task of the university is to contribute to a new moral consensus. The solution to the predicament will come by a ministry who value humanity above nationalism. The theme came nearer home in the paper by the Rev. E. W. Hill, "The World Predicament and the Unitarian Community". Mr. Hill referred to the vital part of the Unitarian ministers as leaders in thought and spiritual life, and this was illustrated in practical experience in the papers on "The Churches and the Changing Situation", by the Rev. A. J. Long and the Rev. F. Sokell, who, from the point of view of a younger and an older minister respectively, gave an autobiographical sketch of their work in various churches.

Thoughts were turned to the future in the paper by the Rev. Dudley Richards on "The Church of Tomorrow". He stressed the view of the Church as a microcosm, stating that what can be accomplished in the Church, the world can accomplish. The guest paper was given by the Rev. E. J. Williams with the title "The Church at Worship" and the devotional service was conducted by the Rev. Ada Tonkin. The theme chosen for the session next year was "The Need for Imagination".

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Holiday Accommodation

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MISCELLANEOUS

RESIDENT housekeeper required by retired Unitarian minister with invalid wife. Modern bungalow, Cheshire.—Write Box 8.

Birth

BARTLETT.—The infant daughter of the Rev. and Mrs. Charles H. Bartlett, born May 30th, was christened Sarah Rosemary at the Unitarian Church in Stalybridge on July 12th by the Rev. J. Harry Smith, Minister of Ryde Chapel, Gee Cross.

Death

BRADSHAW—On June 22nd, 1959, Grace of "Webby", Alexandra Road, Sidmouth, second daughter of the late J. J. and Hannah Bradshaw, formerly of Bolton.

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